



The Hale electrical generating plant, located at the mouth of Provo Canyon, is undergoing a razing.

Herald Photo/Patrick J. Krohn

# Hale electrical plant earns a raze



**PROVO** — A piece of history is vanishing from Utah County with razing of the Hale electrical generating plant at the mouth of Provo Canyon.

When it was built in 1936 it was one of the really large central generating plants in the country. It was named the "Provo Steam Plant" and later the "Orem Plant."

As originally built, it was capable of generating 18,750 kilowatts of power. When a second unit was added in 1950, boosting the capacity to 44,000 kilowatts, the plant was re-named for J.A. Hale, vice president and chief operating officer of Utah Power and Light Co. for many years.

The plant was located at the mouth of Provo Canyon probably because that area was the location of the first long-distance transmission of power. A small hydroelectric plant was constructed on the Provo River by L.L. Nunn, with the goal of transmitting power to his mine in Telluride, Colo.

Until Nunn built the plant, the only transmission of power was by direct current, which could be transmitted only about a mile. Nunn was generating power near his Colorado mine using coal transported to the site by mule, which was very expensive.

In cooperation with George Westinghouse, Nunn developed a plant capable of transmitting alternating current.

Others in the electrical field

thought the two men were mad because of the high voltages produced by alternating current, and they were sure it would never be put to any practical use.

Nunn and Westinghouse were successful in their endeavor, although their system was primitive. A history of the time relates that when they successfully turned the generator on, they were afraid to turn it off because they weren't sure they could get it started again.

Nunn built the Olmstead facility at the mouth of Provo Canyon primarily as a technical school for electrical workers. The field was so new that there were no institutions to educate people in the transmission of electricity.

Nunn called his operation Telluride Power. Later it was merged

with Knight Power Company to form Utah Power and Light Company.

The Hale plant was built to serve an expanding customer base in Utah. It was a coal-fired plant, with coal transported by rail from Carbon and Emery counties.

The greatest factor in locating a generating plant today is the availability of fuel. Utah Power and Light Company found the most profitable coal-fired plants are those located adjacent to the coal mines, like the Castle Gate plant in Carbon County, the Hunter plant in Emery county, and some located in Wyoming.

Availability of fuel and efficiency of operation were factors in the decision to close the Hale plant several years ago.

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# Opinions

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